DR. STRANGE

MARVEL® COMICS GROUP

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

30¢ CC | 23 JUNE 02914

©1977 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

DOCTOR STRANGE

MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS™

ITS NAME IS...

WORMWORLD

AND NO MAN CAN ESCAPE IT

ALIVE!

0 71486 02914 0

Once he was a man like most *others* — a *worldly* man, seduced and jaded by *material* things. But then he discovered the *separate* reality, where *sorcery* and *men's souls* shaped the forces that shape our *lives*. In that instant, he was *born again*, to become a man like *no* other—a man who left us *behind*, as he strove to stand against the unseen subtle perils hovering *thick* and *black* around our fragile existence...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

MARV WOLFMAN WRITER/EDITOR ★ JIM STARLIN & RUDY NEBRES ARTISTS ★ JOE ROSEN LETTERER ★ A. YANCHUS COLORIST

INTO THE QUADRIVERSE!

SOMEWHERE BEYOND HERE, IN A REALM NEVER BEFORE VISITED BY MAN, LIES THE ENTRANCE TO THE QUADRIVERSE...

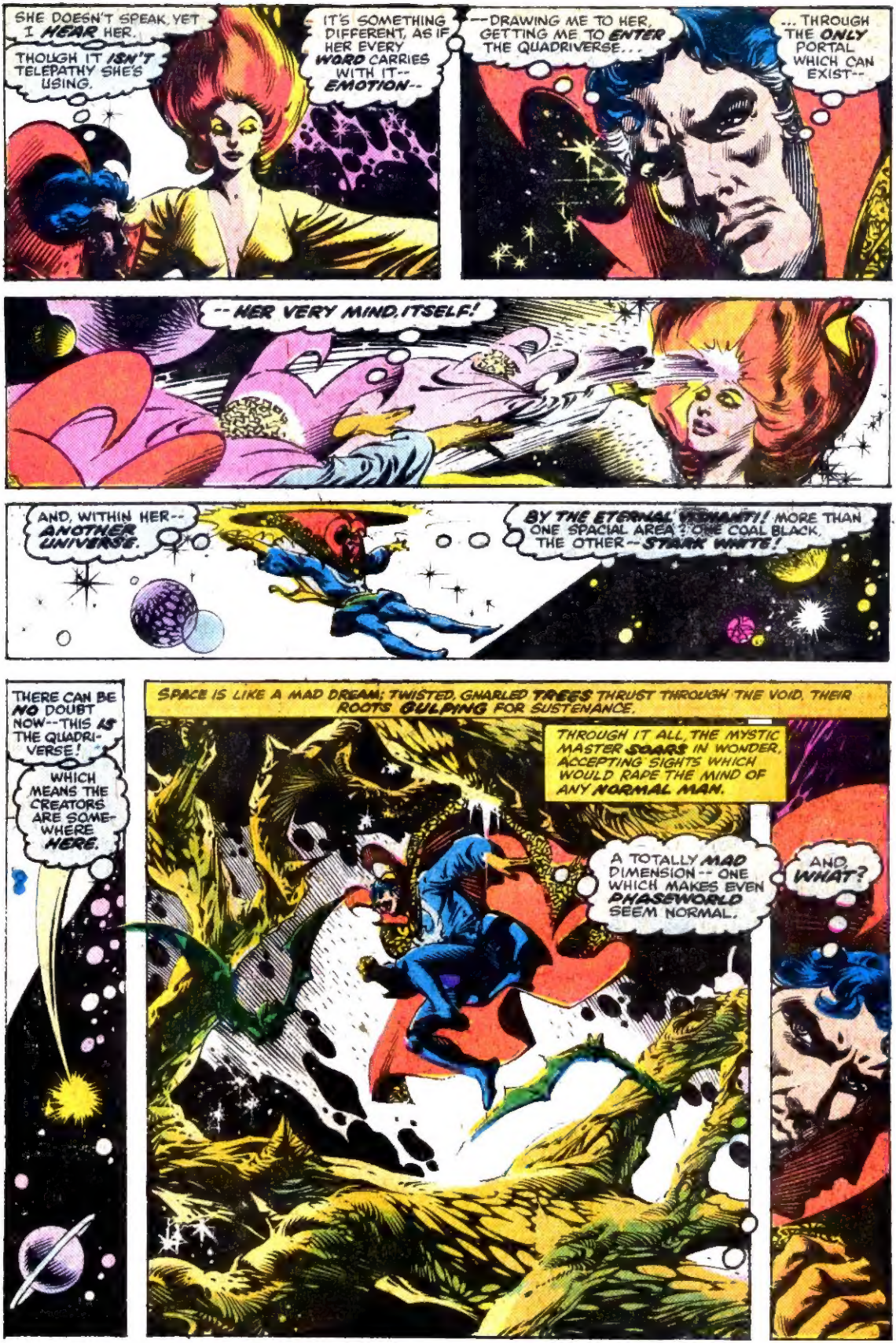
...A FOUR-SECTIONED AREA OF SPACE WHERE LIFE AND SCIENCE BARE NO RELATIONSHIP TO ANY OTHER PART OF THE KNOWN UNIVERSE.

AND IT IS INTO THIS SPECIAL QUADRANT OF SPACE THAT DOCTOR STRANGE, MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS, DARES TO TREAD.

WITH CLEA SAFE, IT'S TIME TO LEARN WHY XANDER DARED ATTACK ME.

DOCTOR STRANGE™ is published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 575 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Published bi-monthly. Copyright ©1977 by Marvel Comics Group. A Division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved 575 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Vol. 1, No. 23, June, 1977 issue. Price 30¢ per copy in the U.S. and Canada. Subscription rate $4.00 for 12 issues. Canada, $5.00. Foreign, $6.00. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Printed in the United States of America. DOCTOR STRANGE (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP.

I'VE WASTED TOO MUCH TIME SINCE XANDER FIRST ASSAULTED ME AND MY COMING HERE.
BUT I HAD TO SEARCH FOR CLEA, AND BATTLE PHAEDRA'S HORDES IN THE WEIRD LANDS OF PHASEWORLD.
AND NOW, AT LAST, I CAN FIND XANDER'S OFT-SPOKEN CREATORS--AND LEARN THEIR INTENT.
FOR, HE TOLD OF THEIR CREATING ANOTHER UNIVERSE--ONE WHICH WOULD DESTROY THE VERY FABRIC OF OUR OWN.
EH? SOMETHING FLOATING IN THE DISTANCE--?
A GIRL-- BUT--?
I AM GUARDIAN OF THE QUADRIVERSE, MYSTIC ONE... GUARDIAN OF LIFE AND DEATH...
GUARDIAN OF ALL THERE HAS EVER BEEN, OF ALL THERE EVER WILL BE.
I AM ALL... AND I AM NOTHING...

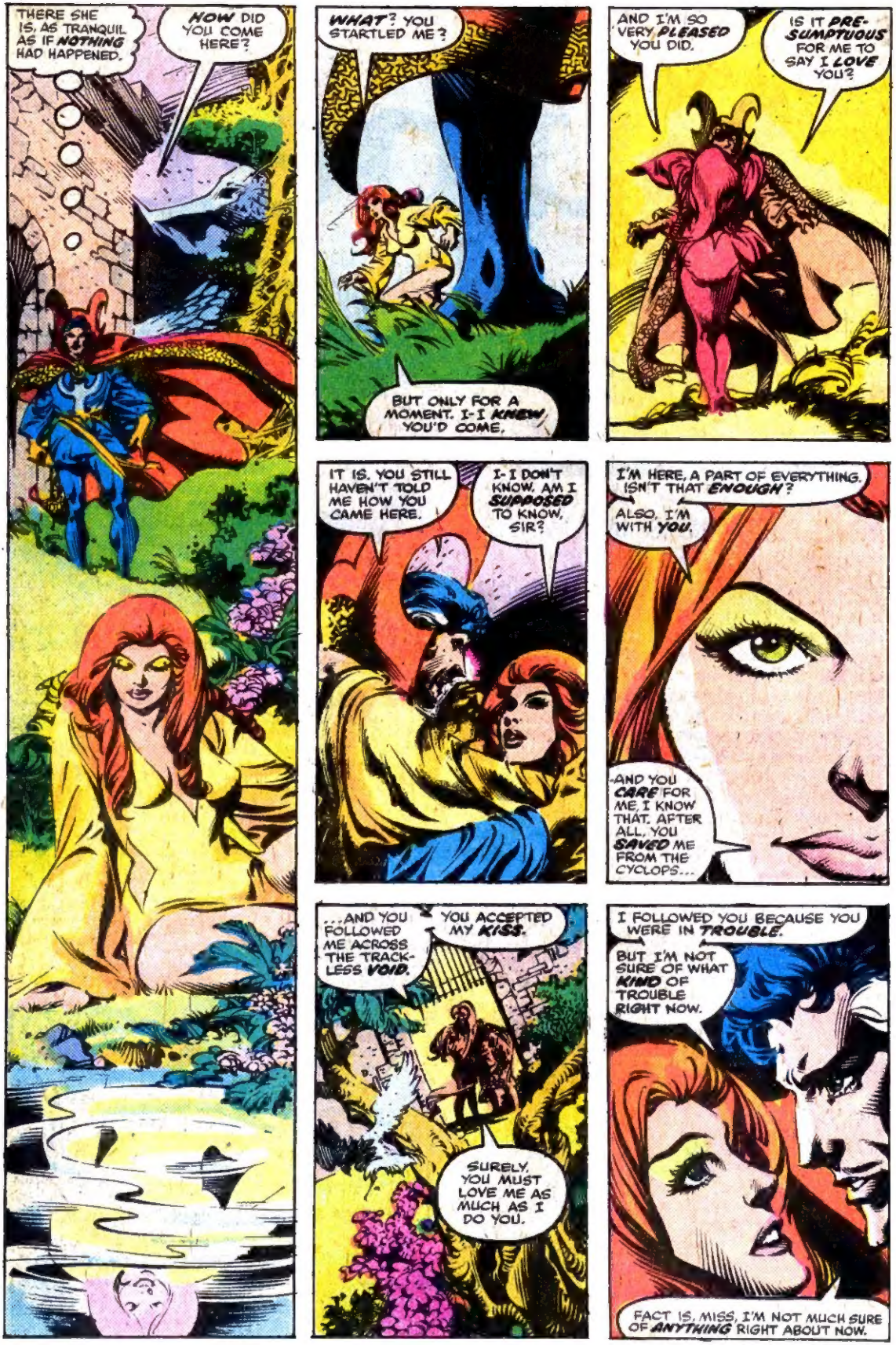

SHE DOESN'T SPEAK, YET I HEAR HER.
THOUGH IT ISN'T TELEPATHY SHE'S USING.
IT'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT, AS IF HER EVERY WORD CARRIES WITH IT-- EMOTION--
--DRAWING ME TO HER, GETTING ME TO ENTER THE QUADRIVERSE...
... THROUGH THE ONLY PORTAL WHICH CAN EXIST--
-- HER VERY MIND, ITSELF!
AND, WITHIN HER-- ANOTHER UNIVERSE.
BY THE ETERNAL VISHANTI! MORE THAN ONE SPACIAL AREA? ONE COAL BLACK, THE OTHER-- STARK WHITE!
THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT NOW--THIS IS THE QUADRIVERSE!
WHICH MEANS THE CREATORS ARE SOMEWHERE HERE.
SPACE IS LIKE A MAD DREAM; TWISTED, GNARLED TREES THRUST THROUGH THE VOID, THEIR ROOTS GULPING FOR SUSTENANCE.
THROUGH IT ALL, THE MYSTIC MASTER SOARS IN WONDER, ACCEPTING SIGHTS WHICH WOULD RAPE THE MIND OF ANY NORMAL MAN.
A TOTALLY MAD DIMENSION -- ONE WHICH MAKES EVEN PHASEWORLD SEEM NORMAL.
AND, WHAT?

THE FEMALE GUARDIAN-- HERE?!?
BOUND TO THAT SPEEDING METEOR!
AND SHE'S SOARING UNCONTROLLABLY TOWARD THAT-- THING!
I DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE WORKINGS OF THIS QUADRIVERSE TO KNOW SHE IS IN DEADLY TROUBLE!
BUT IT'S A PERIL DOCTOR STRANGE CAN END.
IN THE NAME OF THE ALL-SEEING VISHANTI!-- THAT DEMON MUST BE STOPPED!

KWAM
IT STILL MOVES CLOSER, AS IF MY BOLT DIDN'T EVEN DISTURB IT!
AND MORE-- IT APPEARS EVEN MORE POWERFUL THAN BEFORE!
AND IF IT'S ABSORBED MY ENCHANTMENT, AND--
NOOOOO!
COSMIC STORM!
BUFFETED BACK... HELPLESS... CAN'T STOP MYSELF FROM BEING TOSSED ABOUT!
...ONLY ONE CHANCE... DRAW IN ALL MY POWER--
--GIVEN ME BY THE VENERATED ANCIENT ONE.
BEFORE I'M RIPPED ASUNDER WITHIN THIS STORM...
...THAT THING MUST PERISH!
KAA-WAM
IT'S GONE. YET SOMEHOW I KNOW IT WASN'T MY SPELL WHICH CAUSED THAT TO HAPPEN.
EH? THE GIRL-- SHE'S BEING DRAWN INTO THAT VOID!

AND THE FASTER I FLY, THE SWIFTER SHE MOVES FROM ME.
WHICH MEANS I'VE GOT TO DISSOLVE THAT METEOR SHE'S STRAPPED TO--
--AND CATCH HER BEFORE SHE CAN--EH? WHAT'S SHE MOTIONING TOWARD?
SOMETHING BEHIND ME?
BY THE HOARY HOSTS OF HOGGOTH!
THE THING IS BACK!
BUT IT CAN'T REMAIN HERE, NOT IF THE GIRL'S SAFETY IS AT STAKE.
THEREFORE, I MUST USE THE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTORRAK--AND SEND THAT THING TO THE FURTHEST REACHES OF THIS QUADRIVERSE.
IS IT TOO MUCH TO HOPE FOR A PAUSE IN THIS ENDLESS MADNESS?
A CHANCE TO LEARN ABOUT THIS SPACE SECTOR? TO THINK, TO UNDERSTAND WHERE I AM?
AHHH. THE GIRL WAITS FOR ME. PERHAPS NOW IS THE TIME.

SHE SEEMS SO HELPLESS, SO VERY INNOCENT.
WHO ARE YOU? CAN YOU SPEAK?
I-I DO NOT KNOW, SIR. I'VE NEVER KNOWN WHO I AM.
I'VE NEVER BEEN ANYONE BUT ME, AND I'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYTHING BUT BEING ME, AND GROWING UP.
AND EXISTING.
I-I BELIEVE THAT'S ALL THERE IS.
THERE'S MORE. YOUR EYES SPEAK OF PAIN... OF SORROW.
BUT SHE SEEMS TO REMEMBER NOTHING OF IT--OR, PERHAPS, THE TORTURE I SENSE IN HER IS CONSIDERED NORMAL.
AND SO TORTURE BECOMES PEACE TO ONE WHO KNOWS NOTHING MORE.
SHE'S STIRRING SOME EMOTION IN ME, ONE WHICH TELLS ME I'VE GOT TO HELP HER...SAVE HER--EASE HER SUFFERING, SOOTHE HER--DEMONS OF DENAK!
GONE! BEFORE MY EYES -- LIKE SHE WAS NEVER HERE--
--A MERE WILL O' THE WISP.
BUT SHE'S NEITHER A PHANTOM NOR SOME COSMIC MIRAGE. SHE'S FLESH AND BLOOD!
AND IN SOME UNDEFINABLE WAY, SHE'S A VICTIM OF THIS QUADRIVERSE.
I'M NOT SURE IF I UNDERSTAND IT ALL MYSELF--
--NOR DO I KNOW IF WHAT I DO IS CORRECT...
...BUT I'VE GOT TO FIND HER--
--FOR MY VERY SANITY IS AT STAKE.
WITHOUT KNOWING HER NAME, OR ANYTHING ABOUT HER, I'VE BECOME HER PROTECTOR--
--DRAWN TO HER LIKE A MAGNET LURES STEEL TO ITS GRIP.
THAT PLANET -- IS IT POSSIBLE SHE'S BEEN SENT THERE?
WHY ELSE WOULD I FEEL DRAWN TO IT, TOO?
AND WITHOUT KNOWING, I AM SURE THAT MEDIEVAL CASTLE IS CONNECTED WITH EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS HERE.


THERE SHE IS, AS TRANQUIL AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED.
NOW DID YOU COME HERE?
WHAT? YOU STARTLED ME?
BUT ONLY FOR A MOMENT. I-I KNEW YOU'D COME.
AND I'M SO VERY PLEASED YOU DID.
IS IT PRESUMPTUOUS FOR ME TO SAY I LOVE YOU?
IT IS. YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOLD ME HOW YOU CAME HERE.
I-I DON'T KNOW. AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW, SIR?
I'M HERE. A PART OF EVERYTHING. ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?
ALSO, I'M WITH YOU.
AND YOU CARE FOR ME, I KNOW THAT. AFTER ALL, YOU SAVED ME FROM THE CYCLOPS...
...AND YOU FOLLOWED ME ACROSS THE TRACKLESS VOID.
YOU ACCEPTED MY KISS.
SURELY, YOU MUST LOVE ME AS MUCH AS I DO YOU.
I FOLLOWED YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE IN TROUBLE.
BUT I'M NOT SURE OF WHAT KIND OF TROUBLE RIGHT NOW.
FACT IS, MISS, I'M NOT MUCH SURE OF ANYTHING RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

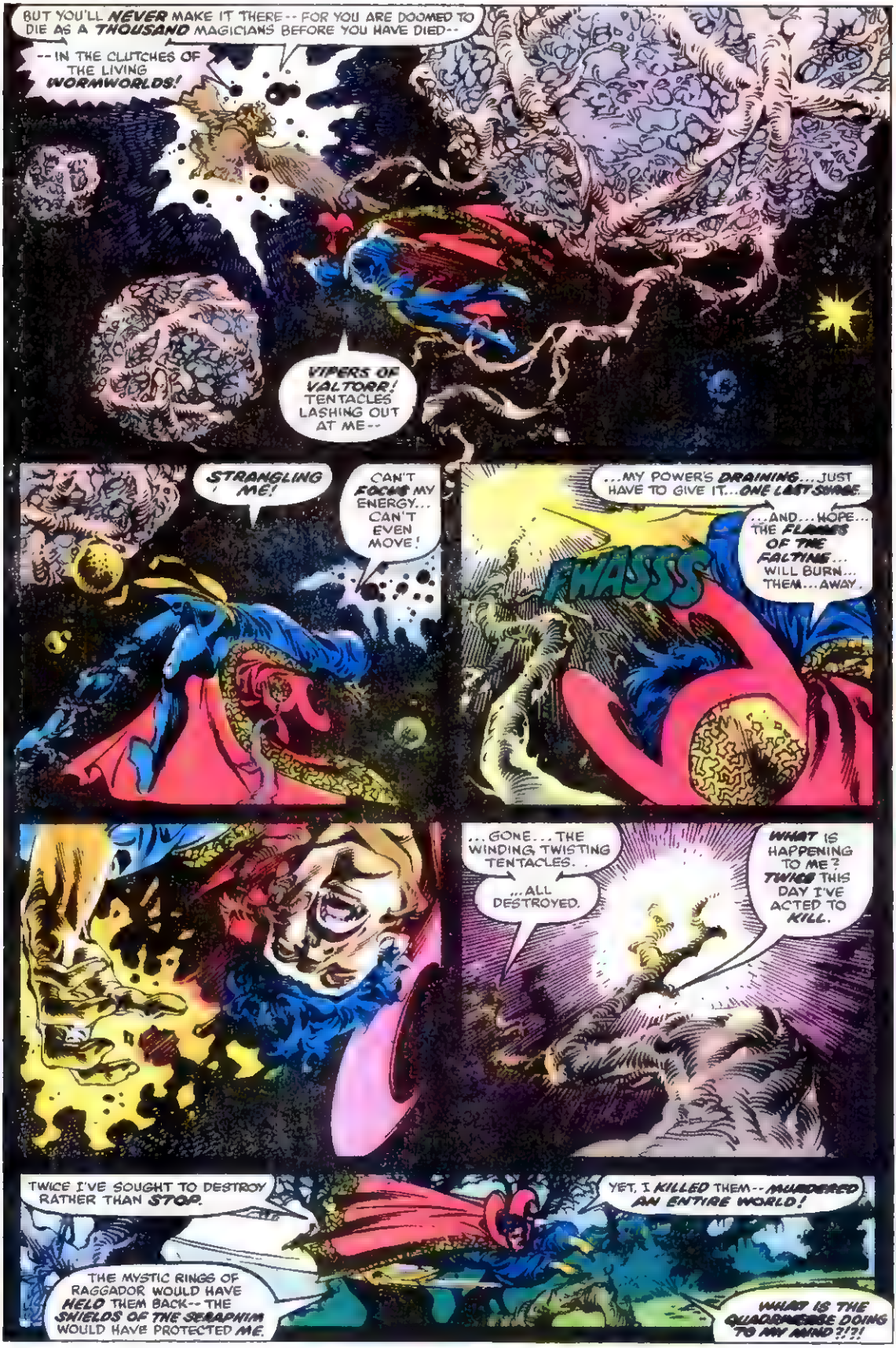
THEN BE SURE OF THIS, MAGE-- YOU HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO DEATH!
THAT IS THE PENALTY FOR SAVING MY WOMAN FROM HER DUTIFUL SACRIFICE.
TURN AND FACE ME, MAGICIAN. THE DUEL BEGINS!
AND JUST AS SWIFTLY-- ENDS!

THE SORCERER FALLS, AND THE GIRL IS MINE-- AGAIN!
AND UNLESS YOU WISH A MORE LASTING DEATH, LEAVE THE QUADRIVERSE--
--AND NEVER LET ME SEE YOU HERE AGAIN.
THERE IS NO ROOM HERE FOR US BOTH, AND MY MYSTIC FRIEND-- I RULE HERE--

FORGET IT.
MAYBE I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON HERE--
--AND MAYBE I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE, OR WHAT THE GIRL'S DUTY IS...

...BUT I WON'T ALLOW MYSELF TO BE ATTACKED BY YOU-- OR BY ANYONE!
THEN FOLLOW ME AT THE RISK OF LOSING YOUR LIFE A SECOND TIME, MAGE.
AND PERHAPS FOR A THIRD, OR A FOURTH, OR EVEN A SIXTH TIME.
YOUR SYSTEMS OF LOGIC AND SCIENCE DO NOT EXIST HERE, MAGICIAN. YOU CAN DIE AND DIE AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND EACH TIME I CAN MAKE THE DEATH EVER MORE PAINFUL!

AND WHEN YOU DIE FOR THE FINAL TIME, YOU WILL BE BROUGHT TO THE CREATORS, AND YOU WILL BE BURNT TO A COSMIC ASH!

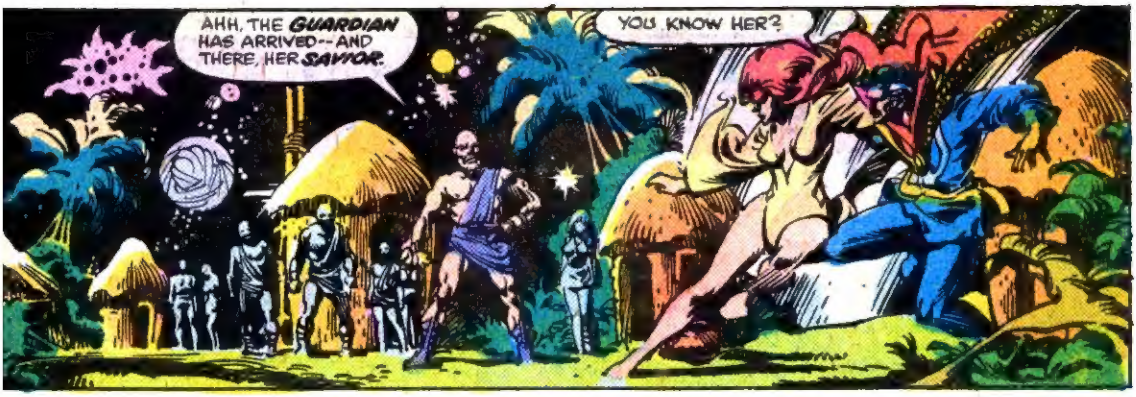

BUT YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT THERE -- FOR YOU ARE DOOMED TO DIE AS A THOUSAND MAGICIANS BEFORE YOU HAVE DIED --
-- IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE LIVING WORMWORLDS!
VIPERS OF VALTORR! TENTACLES LASHING OUT AT ME --
STRANGLING ME!
CAN'T FOCUS MY ENERGY... CAN'T EVEN MOVE!
...MY POWER'S DRAINING... JUST HAVE TO GIVE IT... ONE LAST SURGE.
FWASSS
...AND... HOPE... THE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE... WILL BURN... THEM... AWAY.
...GONE... THE WINDING, TWISTING TENTACLES...
...ALL DESTROYED.
WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME? TWICE THIS DAY I'VE ACTED TO KILL.
TWICE I'VE SOUGHT TO DESTROY RATHER THAN STOP.
YET, I KILLED THEM -- MURDERED AN ENTIRE WORLD!
THE MYSTIC RINGS OF RAGGADOR WOULD HAVE HELD THEM BACK -- THE SHIELDS OF THE SERAPHIM WOULD HAVE PROTECTED ME.
WHAT IS THE QUADRUMERGE DOING TO MY MIND?!?!

YOU'VE ESCAPED THE WORMWORLDS, SORCERER. EXCELLENT! NO MAN OR BEAST HAS EVER DONE THAT BEFORE.
A SHAME. FOR YOU'VE SURVIVED ONE DEATH ONLY TO FACE ANOTHER!
THEN, SO HELP ME, KNIGHT -- I'LL DIE FIGHTING!
AND I WON'T STOP UNTIL MY LAST BREATH IS SPENT.
ATTEND NOW, MAGE -- LET US DUEL!
AND YET ANOTHER BATTLE TAKES PRECEDENT OVER SAVING THE GIRL'S LIFE --
--MORE VIOLENCE BEGETTING VIOLENCE.
AND, WHILE I PLAY GAMES WITH THIS KNIGHT -- THE CHAOS AND SUFFERING DESTROYING MY UNIVERSE!
YET -- THOUGH I KNOW ALL THAT, I CANNOT HELP MYSELF. I'VE BEEN DRAWN INTO THIS PLAY --
--AND I'M FORCED TO GO ALONG WITH IT!
HELP! PLEASE... SOMEONE... HELP ME!
BY THE UNSPEAKABLE UMAR! LIVING LIMBS -- DRAWING DOWN THE GIRL!

DISTRACTIONS WILL YET BE THE DEATH OF YOU, SORCERER.
KRAK
YOU SHOULD ATTEND TO THE BATTLE, AND NOT TO THE WENCH.
THAT DOES IT, KNIGHT.
I'M FED UP WITH ALL OF THIS!
WHAM
WHAT?
IMAGES OF IKONN! NO ONE INSIDE THE SUIT?
I WAS BATTLING-- NOTHING BUT AN EMPTY SUIT OF ARMOR?
I SAID IT BEFORE--THIS QUADRIVERSE IS MADNESS INCARNATE! A CORRUPTER OF THE MIND AND BODY--OF MAGIC AND LOGIC--BOTH!
AND, IF I DIDN'T HAVE TO SAVE THE GIRL AND MEET WITH THE CREATORS--I'D BE DAMNED IF I'D STAY HERE ANOTHER MOMENT.
THE GIRL? IN MY ASTONISHMENT, I FORGOT ABOUT HER.
THE ROOTS DRAGGED HER--
DEMONS OF DENAK!

BENEATH THE GROUND-- A CIVILIZATION OF LIVING, BREATHING ROOTS.
BUT, IF THAT MEANS WHAT I BELIEVE IT DOES--
--THE GIRL COULD BE DOOMED!
BACK AWAY-- LEAVE HER ALONE!
YOU GET AWAY, MAN OR ELSE WE'LL VENT OUR HUNGER ON YOU!
WE EXIST ON ORGANIC MEATS-- AND YOU SURFACE PEOPLE SUPPLY OUR NUTRITION--
--WITH YOUR LIVES!
I WAS UNCERTAIN BEFORE THIS, BUT NOW I'M SURE-- THIS IS ALL BEING PLAYED OUT FOR ME. WHY ELSE WOULD THAT ROOT EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO ME.
SOMEHOW I SENSE THE CREATORS ARE WATCHING THIS-- AND ENJOYING IT ALL.
AS I'M TOSSED ABOUT HERE LIKE A HELPLESS PUPPET ON A STRING.
BUT, IF THEY WANT A SHOW, SO BE IT. I'LL GIVE IT TO THEM!
GIVE ME THE GIRL, ROOT!
THEN YOU DIE IN HER PLACE!
WHAT?!

IT'S TOO STRONG, BUT-- I MUST BREAK FREE--
--AND, BY THE UNSPEAKABLE UMAR--I WILL!
WITH ALL THE POWER OF THE DREAD DORMAMMU-- BY THE OMNISCIENCE OF THE VENERATED ANCIENT ONE... I CALL UPON THE ETERNAL VISHANTI-- FOR ALL THIS MISBEGOTTEN TO BEGONE! BEGONE!
BA-TAMM
SO, NOW ONLY THE TWO OF US REMAIN--
...WHILE I HAVE TAKEN LIFE A THIRD TIME... TO SAVE MY OWN.
YET, THERE ISN'T TIME FOR CONTEMPLATION NOW-- I'LL DO THAT AFTER I'VE LEFT THIS SPATIAL SPHERE-- YOU STILL MUST BE SAVED.
CAN YOU REMEMBER WHERE YOU LIVE, GIRL?
I CAN'T. I WAS BORN ADRIFT, ON THE SEAS OF SPACE.
NO MOTHER, NO FATHER, JUST A SENSE OF--DUTY.
AND NOW... I FEEL MYSELF COASTING WITH THE TIDE...
...PERHAPS HOMEWARD BOUND, AT LAST.
THAT FLOATING ISLAND?
HOME?


AHH, THE GUARDIAN HAS ARRIVED--AND THERE, HER SAVIOR.
YOU KNOW HER?

SHE AND ALL THE OTHERS, I KNOW THEM ALL.

SHE IS THE GUARDIAN OF THE QUADRIVERSE, AND THIS, SON, IS THE FOURTH QUADRANT.

THE FIRST SPACE SECTOR IS MENACE.

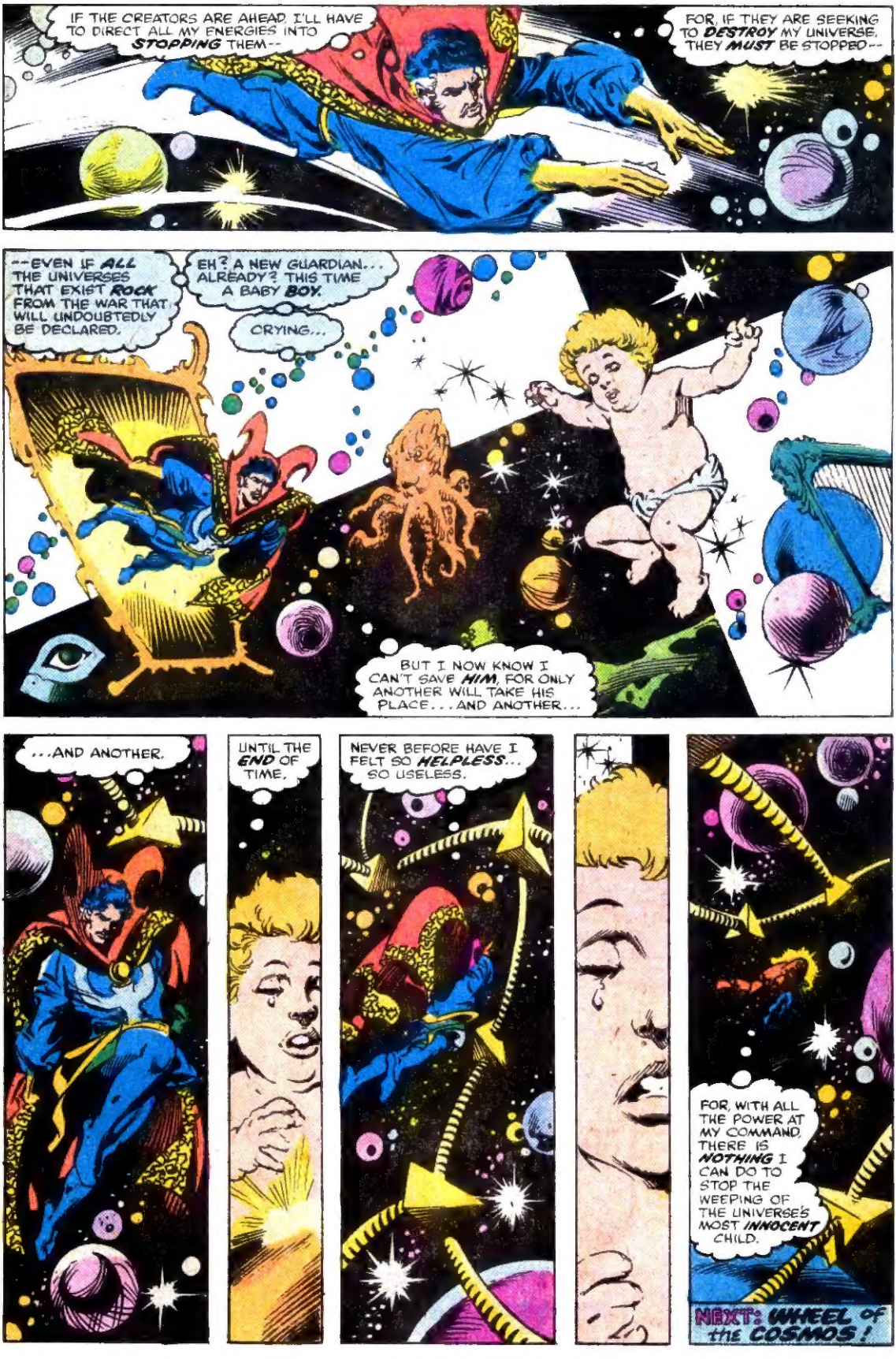
THE SECOND IS CALMNESS, TRANQUILITY-- A LONELY STRETCH OF LAND WITH A LOVELY CASTLE.

THE THIRD IS THE STYGIAN DEPTHS OF HELL ITSELF.

BETWEEN THEM ALL THERE IS ONE COMMON GOAL-- BEYOND THEM IS THE FOURTH SECTOR-- HOME.
BEFORE ONE CAN COME HERE, ONE MUST SURVIVE THE FIRST THREE SPACE SECTORS.

SO YOU SEE, SON, WE ARE ALL GUARDIANS AT ONE TIME, ALL KEEPING MENACES FROM OUR DOORSTEP. AND EACH OF US SAVED A GUARDIAN, ONLY TO REPLACE HIM-- UNTIL WE, IN TURN, WERE SAVED AND ALLOWED TO MOVE ON THROUGH THE QUADRIVERSE.
AND WE SURVIVED THE JOURNEY HOME.

YOU SAY YOU GUARDED THE ENTRANCE TO THIS SECTOR?
AYE, SON, I, MYSELF, WAS GUARDIAN FOR SIX THOUSAND YEARS UNTIL I FACED THE ORDEAL OF THE QUADRIVERSE.
I WAS THE FIRST HERE TO BATTLE MY WAY TO SAFETY...
...AND I FOUNDED THIS HOME ISLAND.
THE GIRL YOU SAVED WAS GUARDIAN FOR A LITTLE OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS.
AND YOU MUST REPLACE ME NOW.
I CAN'T-- I DON'T BELONG HERE AND, BESIDE, I HAVE A MISSION-- TO FIND THE CREATORS.
THEN, MY WONDERFUL SAVIOR, TAKE CARE--
-- FOR THE CREATORS CAN BE UN-MERCIFUL.
AND THEY ARE MOST... POWERFUL.
HE DIDN'T LISTEN, GIRL. THEN AGAIN, YOUTH NEVER DOES.
BUT, HE WILL LEARN. BY ALL THAT IS TRUE AND JUST, HE WILL LEARN.
FOR GODS CAN NOT BE RECKONED WITH--
--BY EITHER MAN OR SORCERER


IF THE CREATORS ARE AHEAD, I'LL HAVE TO DIRECT ALL MY ENERGIES INTO STOPPING THEM--
FOR, IF THEY ARE SEEKING TO DESTROY MY UNIVERSE, THEY MUST BE STOPPED--
--EVEN IF ALL THE UNIVERSES THAT EXIST ROCK FROM THE WAR THAT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE DECLARED,
EH? A NEW GUARDIAN... ALREADY? THIS TIME A BABY BOY.
CRYING...
BUT I NOW KNOW I CAN'T SAVE HIM, FOR ONLY ANOTHER WILL TAKE HIS PLACE... AND ANOTHER...
...AND ANOTHER.
UNTIL THE END OF TIME.
NEVER BEFORE HAVE I FELT SO HELPLESS... SO USELESS.
FOR, WITH ALL THE POWER AT MY COMMAND, THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO TO STOP THE WEEPING OF THE UNIVERSE'S MOST INNOCENT CHILD.
NEXT: WHEEL OF the COSMOS!